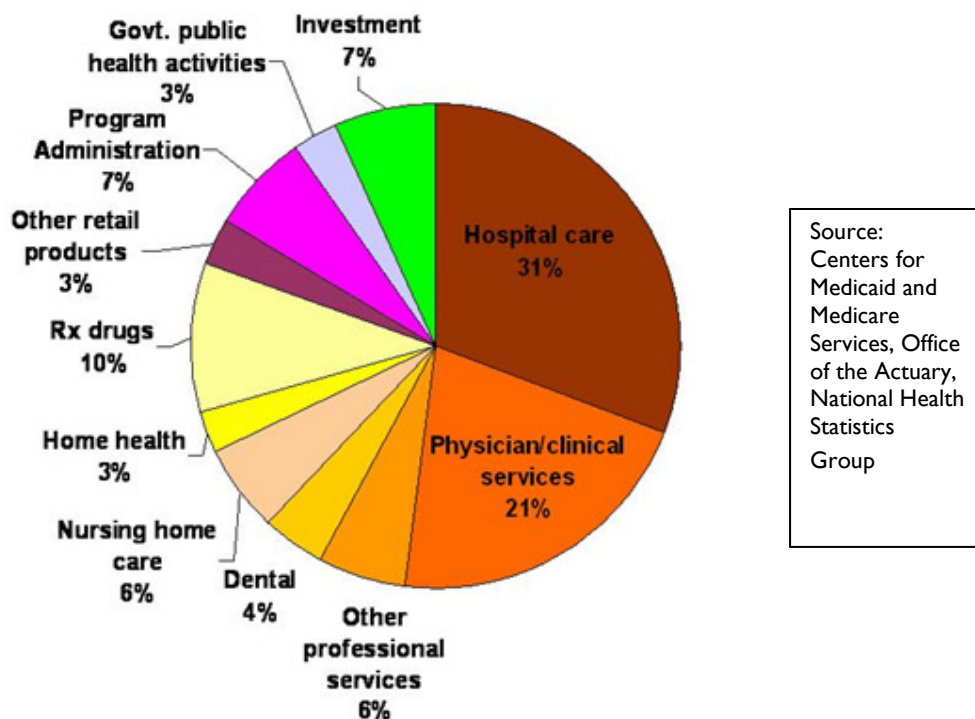


## WELLNESS AT WORK

National health care costs have been rising for several years, and the statistics are startling:

- U.S. healthcare costs doubled from 1990 to 2001 and are projected to double again by 2012;
- Four of the ten most costly health conditions are related to heart disease and stroke. People with heart disease and heart disease risk factors cost employers thousands of dollars more than healthy individuals each year through higher insurance;
- Of the \$5000 per employee the average employer spent on health care in 2001, more than 95% was spent on diagnosis and treatment and no more than 1-2% in prevention
- In 2008, U.S. healthcare expenditures topped \$2.3 trillion. How those dollars were spent is illustrated in the chart below:



Many people mistakenly think that there's nothing they can do to combat these increasing expenses. But that's not true. Studies show that wellness programs are proven to be an effective way for employees to take control and help contain these costs from rising at such an alarming rate.

Wellness is important from an employer perspective as well. Studies have shown that employees are more likely to be on the job and performing well when they are in optimal physical and psychological health. Employees are also more likely to be attracted to, remain with, and value a company that values them. Employers see many other benefits from healthy employees including:

- A 28% reduction in sick leave absenteeism;
- An improvement on-the-job time utilization and decision making;
- An improvement with employee morale, which leads to a reduction in turnover;
- A 30% reduced worker's comp claims and disability management; and
- A 26% reduction in use of the health care benefit

Many employers are beginning to realize the importance of providing their employees with tools and resources to help them manage their physical well-being by developing “worksite wellness” programs. Worksite wellness is most often described as a series of non-medical, life quality-enhancing interventions at job sites.

The City of Gulfport has also embraced this trend and in January of this year the health insurance committee decided to initiate a wellness program for our employees.

In January we created a team of employees who would have a role in program development, implementation and evaluation.

Our Wellness Committee consists of: Christal Adams-Municipal Court; Kini Gonsoulin-General Administration, Mark Burns-Police Department; Rob Enochs-Police Department; Billy Bragg-Fire Department; Jay Ellis-Fire Department; Bruce Griebel-Public Works; David D’Aquila-Leisure Services; Brittany Allen-Leisure Services; Nahoma White-Webb-Urban Development; Cara Pucheu-City Council; and Butch Jordan-Former Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Gulfport; Sherri Baker-Sawyer Foster Insurance Broker and Consultant; along with administrative oversight from Human Resources Manager, Cheryl Millender.

During the month of February the wellness team conducted an employee’s need s assessment survey to determine what you, our employees, would like to see in a wellness program. The committee was happy to report that we received a forty (40%) response.

From your feedback, the committee learned that you would like us to offer educational programs, to include nutritional and weight management programs. As far as the worksite changes, you would like the City to provide preventative wellness screenings, which would include blood pressure, body composition, cholesterol, etc, along with health risk appraisals.

Over the next year, your Wellness Committee will be working toward developing a comprehensive wellness program fro you, our employees.

In March, we started promoting National Health Observance months, which focuses on a new topic each month by e-mail. Various wellness activities will be on-going with short and long term initiatives developed and implemented over the next 3 months to 2 years.